

Public Health at risk:

Examples of programs receiving support from the King County general fund

Community Clinics

Across King County, vulnerable adults and children count on the medical and dental services they receive at community health clinics. In partnership with Public Health Centers, local community clinics play a crucial role in the health care safety net. More than 54,000 uninsured people – over 1/3 of King County's uninsured population – count on primary care services through the local health care safety net, and another 85,000 low-income people with insurance receive medical care. Community clinics receive King County general funds as one source of support for services to the uninsured.

Any reduction will mean that more people will go without access to regular health care, including the preventative care that keeps them healthy, fewer will have the opportunity to manage their diabetes and other chronic illnesses effectively, and more will use emergency rooms as expensive and inefficient last resorts for care.

Oral Health

Low-income children in schools and day cares have healthier mouths and healthier lives because of the screenings and dental sealants they receive to reduce tooth decay. At 58 schools across King County, 3,500 second and third graders -- some of the most vulnerable in the county -- receive this service. Overall, the Oral Health program served more than 20,000 people last year.

Reducing these services means that the most vulnerable children in our community will have more cavities, be in more pain, miss more school and be at greater risk for future oral health problems.

Tuberculosis

Active Tuberculosis (TB) cases in King County are at a 30-year high, with 161 reported active cases in 2007. As an international port of entry, King County is vulnerable to new TB infections. While TB kills two million people every year worldwide, King County's TB Control program has kept local disease rates low by comparison. People at risk for TB are screened, outbreaks are detected and prevented from spreading, and treatment is provided to people who are sick with TB.

On any given day in King County, about 100 people with active TB receive program services to help them get well and prevent the spread of infection. In a year, TB program staff sees nearly 3,000 clients making 9,000 clinic visits. Over 50 percent of clients who rely on Public Health for TB services live at or near poverty level and have limited options for care.

Reducing TB services will put the public at risk for higher levels of disease in the community. More people with active TB disease will receive less support to help them get well and complete treatment, creating greater risk for dangerous and expensive drug resistant strains to develop. And more people at risk for developing active TB disease will not be screened and treated, creating new opportunities for the disease to develop and spread in the community.

Family Planning

More than 16,000 low-income women, men and teens across King County last year received health education, birth control services, sexually transmitted disease (STD) screening, diagnosis and treatment, and breast and cancer screenings through the Family Planning program. Served through nine family planning clinics across the county, more than 44 percent of Family Planning clients have no insurance.

The Seattle metropolitan area has the lowest rate of teen mothers, according to the Health of Urban USA report in 2007. This remarkable accomplishment could be put at risk by reductions in access to subsidized reproductive health services, especially to our most vulnerable communities in the county.

Child Care Health

Children in King County child care facilities are safe and healthy with the support of the Child Care Health program. Program staff made nearly 5,000 visits to child care facilities last year, providing nursing, nutrition and mental health expertise. They train child care providers on critical safety, health and emergency response activities. They also support disease outbreak responses at facilities, supply educational materials for parents and providers, and consult with families and providers of children with behavioral health issues.

Reductions in the Child Care Health program will put children at greater risk for unsafe or unhealthy conditions at their daycare. They will be at greater danger for injury, have fewer opportunities for good nutrition, and be at greater risk for communicable disease outbreaks. Fewer children with behavioral and health issues will be identified by child care providers and provided with treatment.